

the bottom of my heart for what you and your husbands and your communities do to help, really, America realize the dream of Martin Luther King, which is to elevate the dignity of each person, the worth of each person, the freedom of each person to realize his or her dreams.

In my judgment, many times the most effective programs to realize that national ambition is through our faith community, because people of faith have heard a universal call. I remember when my friend Tony Evans from Dallas one time talked about broken foundations, cracks on the wall. And the painter kept trying to repaint the wall of the house, and they could never get it right until, finally, somebody stepped up to them and said, "First you need to fix the foundation." It's that spirit of fixing foundations and helping people realize their true worth, through love and compassion and a—the truth of the matter is—reliance on a being far greater than Government, the Almighty, that enables you all to do the works of mercy and kindness and neighborhood healing that goes on. The true strength of America truly is found in the hearts and souls of our citizens. And in my judgment, a way to honor the great Martin Luther King is to call upon Americans to unleash that compassion.

And so I want to welcome you here. You're generals in the armies of compassion who are changing America one heart and one soul and one conscience at a time, and for that, our Nation is grateful.

And I am grateful that Laura said yes when I asked her to marry me. [*Laughter*] Our First Lady.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:22 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Anthony T. Evans, senior pastor, Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Senate Inaction on Appropriations Legislation

January 20, 2004

Today a minority in the Senate denied a vote on a spending bill that is 4 months overdue and that fulfills important commitments: commitments to veterans who need health care; to Africans suffering from AIDS; to FBI agents fighting terror; to children learning to read in our Nation's public schools. This bill stays within the spending limits I proposed. And the Senate needs to pass it.

Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union

January 20, 2004

Mr. Speaker, Vice President Cheney, Members of Congress, distinguished guests, and fellow citizens: America this evening is a nation called to great responsibilities, and we are rising to meet them.

As we gather tonight, hundreds of thousands of American service men and women are deployed across the world in the war on terror. By bringing hope to the oppressed and delivering justice to the violent, they are making America more secure.

Each day, law enforcement personnel and intelligence officers are tracking terrorist threats; analysts are examining airline passenger lists; the men and women of our new Homeland Security Department are patrolling our coasts and borders. And their vigilance is protecting America.

Americans are proving once again to be the hardest working people in the world. The American economy is growing stronger. The tax relief you passed is working.

Tonight Members of Congress can take pride in the great works of compassion and reform that skeptics had thought impossible. You're raising the standards for our public schools, and you are giving our senior citizens prescription drug coverage under Medicare.

We have faced serious challenges together, and now we face a choice: We can go forward